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ABSTRACT

This is one of a series of elementary readers written in Cantonese and English and designed to familiarize children with the traditional major Chinese festivals celebrated by the Chinese in America. This booklet describes in narrative form the meaning of the red envelopes given with money gifts at Chinese New Year and other festivities. A page of notes in English explaining the custom is also provided. (CLK)

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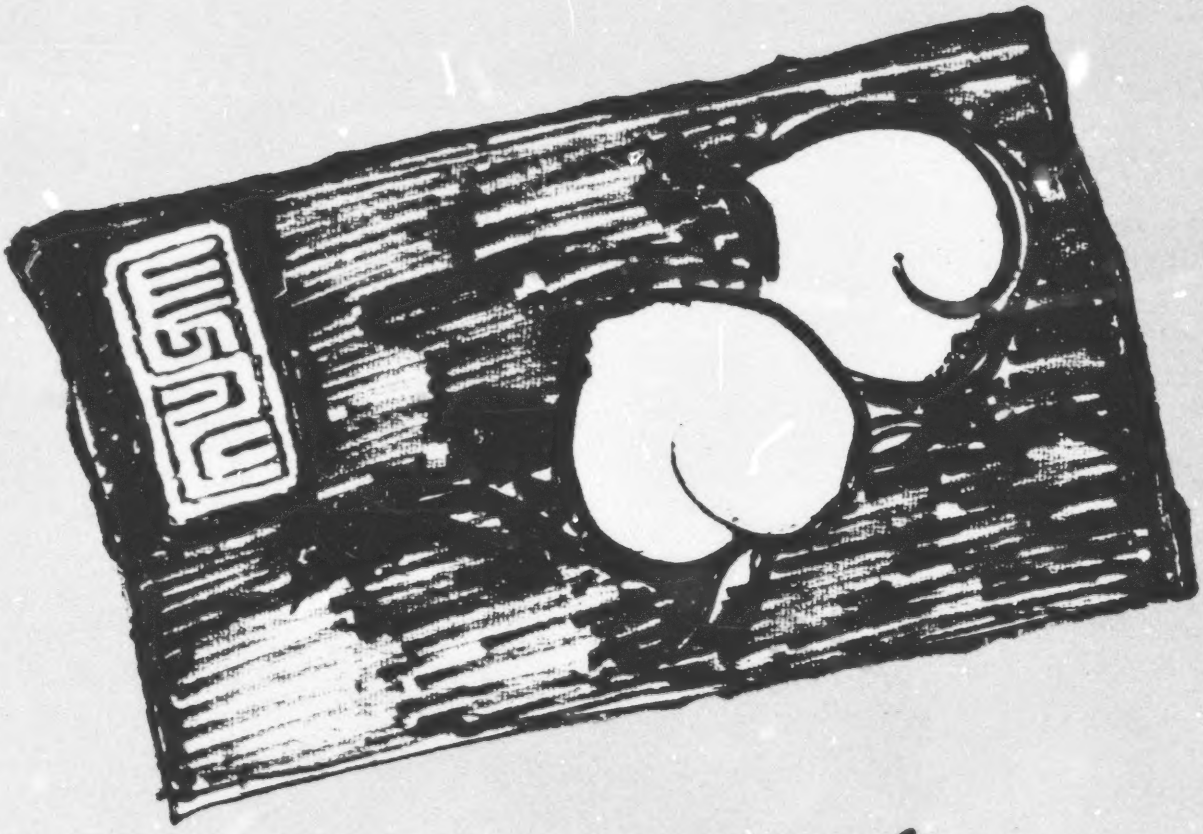

THE STORY OF THE Red Envelopes

紅封的故事

Gordon Lew

Chinese Bilingual
Pilot Program

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EDUCATION & WELFARE
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It is with pleasure that the Chinese Bilingual Program, ESEA Title VII, disseminates this information about a specific custom in the celebration of Chinese New Year. Due to "assimilation", much of the content within this booklet has either been taken for granted or has been forgotten by many within the Chinese community. May this be the beginning of many attempts to bring into focus a very rich heritage – one of America's total heritages.

February, 1971

Mr. Wellington Chew,
Supervisor

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Chairman of Chinese Bilingual Advisory Committee

中美雙重語言教育計劃爲溝通中美文化，嘗試介紹我國傳統習俗。在這本小冊子內，介紹慶祝農曆新年派「紅封」的習慣。

3

Chinese New Year is here!

新年到了！

小美和小明
很早起床.

May and Ming get up early.

They greet their grandparents on
New Year's Day.

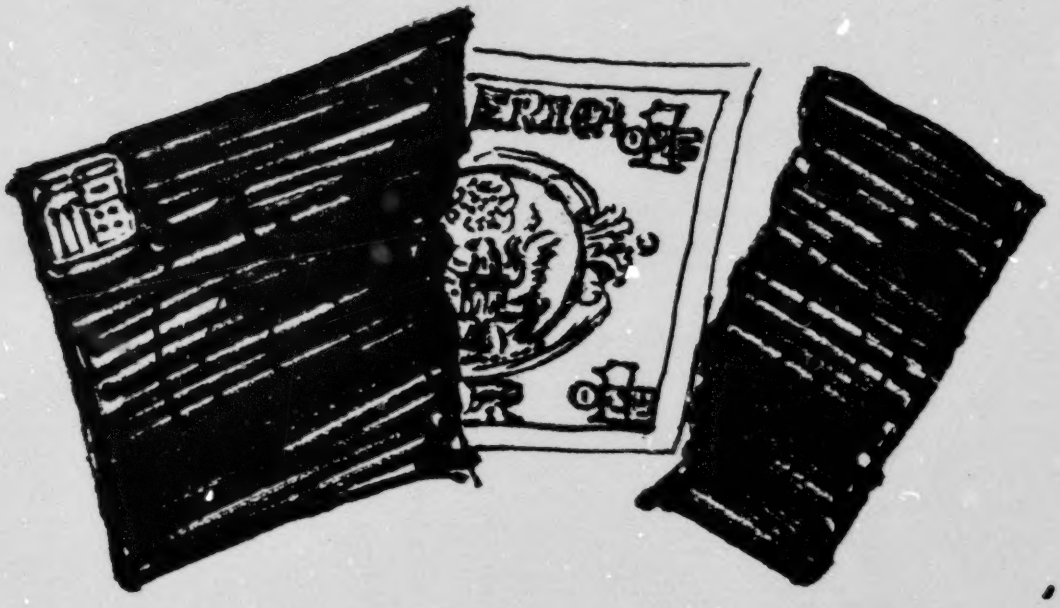
向祖父母拜年.

Grandparents give them
red envelopes.

祖父母給他們紅封.

小明十分高興,
他說:「我有錢了,
我有錢了.」

Ming is very happy.
He yells: "Oh boy! Money!"



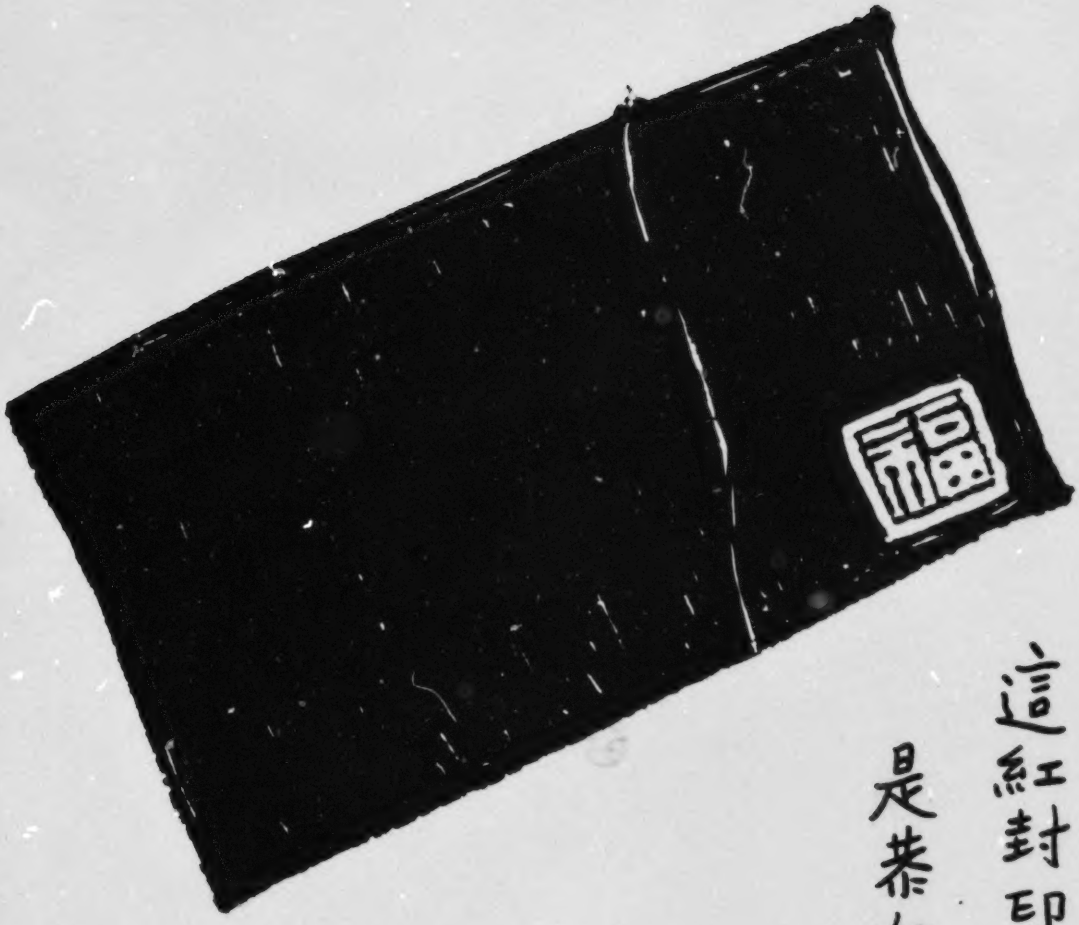
小明拆開紅封，
拿了裏面的鈔票，便…

Ming opens the envelope,
takes out the money,
and . . .

. . . throws away the
red envelope!

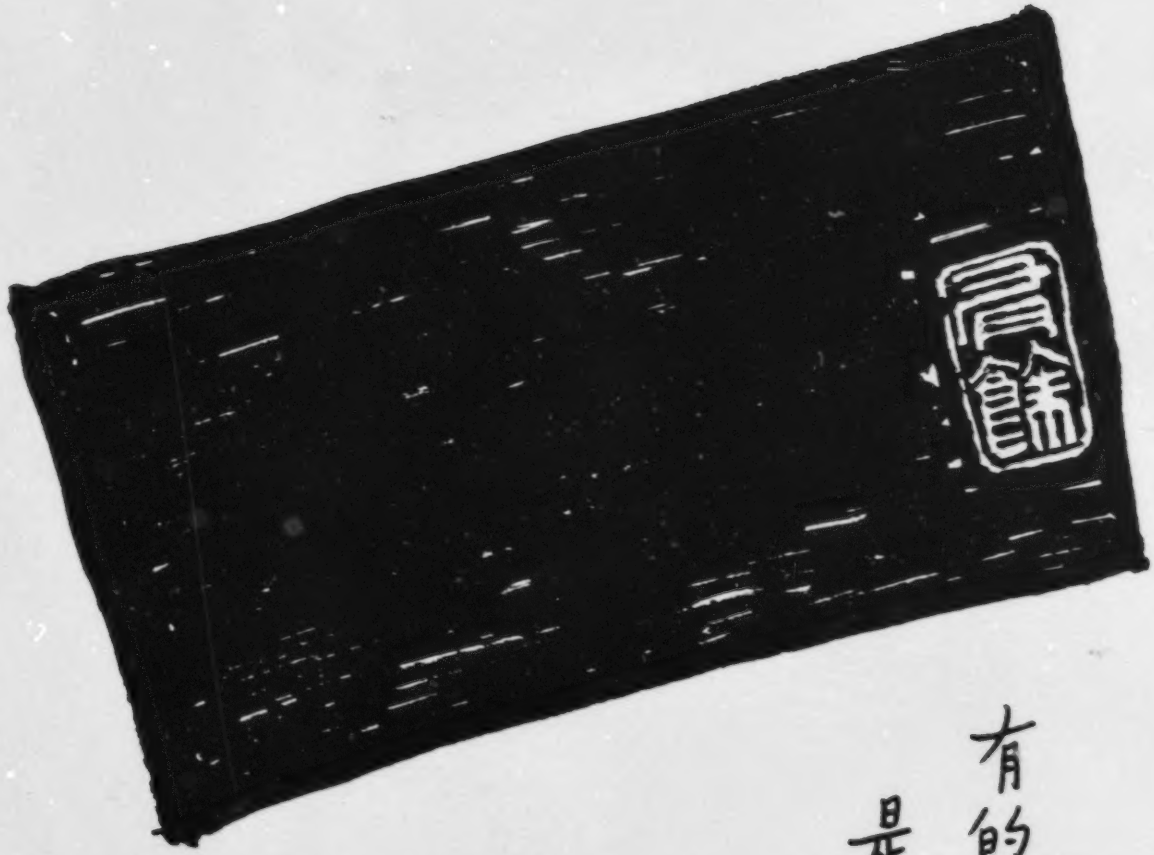
May said "Ming, don't throw the red envelope away. You're supposed to keep it." "Why?" asks Ming. "Because along with the money is a wish from our grandparents. Look! There's something printed on the envelope."

小美說：「不要把紅封丟掉，你知道紅封上圖案的意義嗎？」



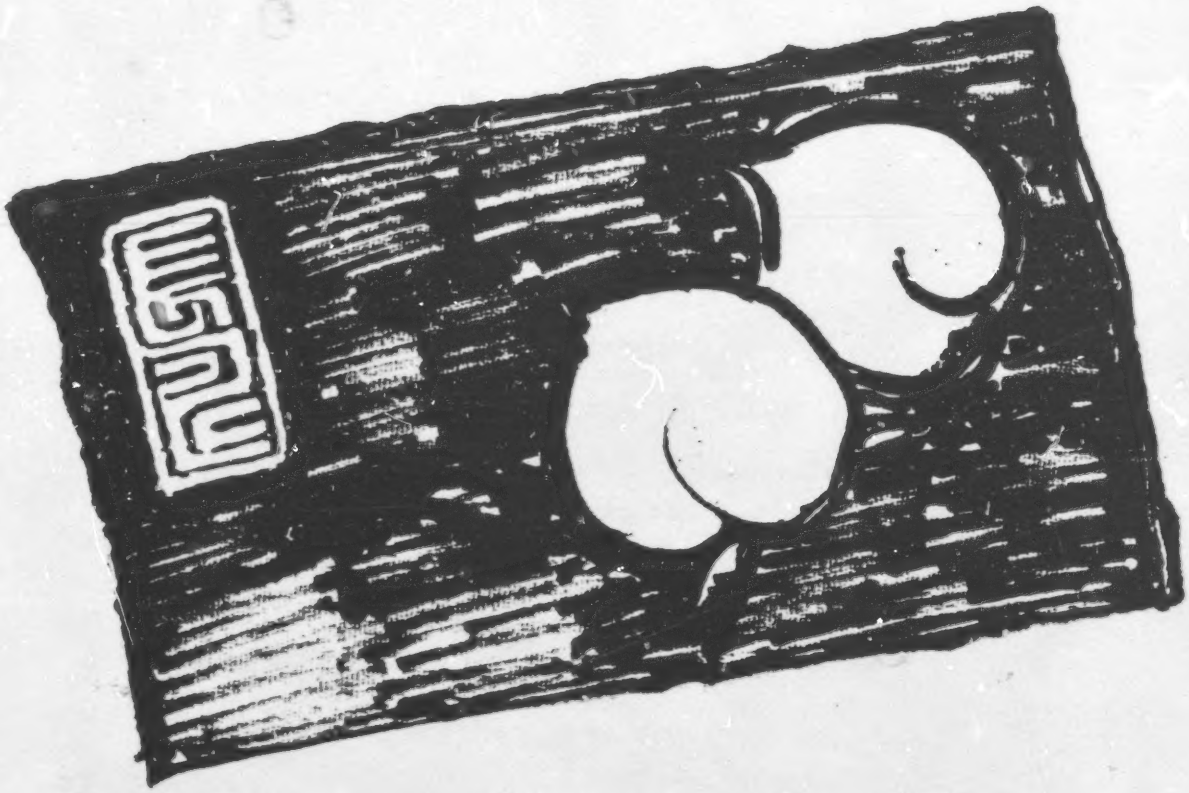
這紅封印的是一隻蝙蝠.
是恭賀別人有福的意思.

This one has a bat on it.
It means blessing because
the Chinese words bat蝠
and blessing福 both sound
and look alike. Look! You've
broken the bat's wing!



有的印上一條魚，
是採家中糧食有餘
的意思。

This has a fish on it.
It is a wish that in the
coming year there will be
plenty of food. The words
fish 魚 and plentiful 餘 (surplus)
have the same sound "yue."



This has peaches on it.
It is a wish for long
life. The Chinese use the
peach as a birthday fruit.

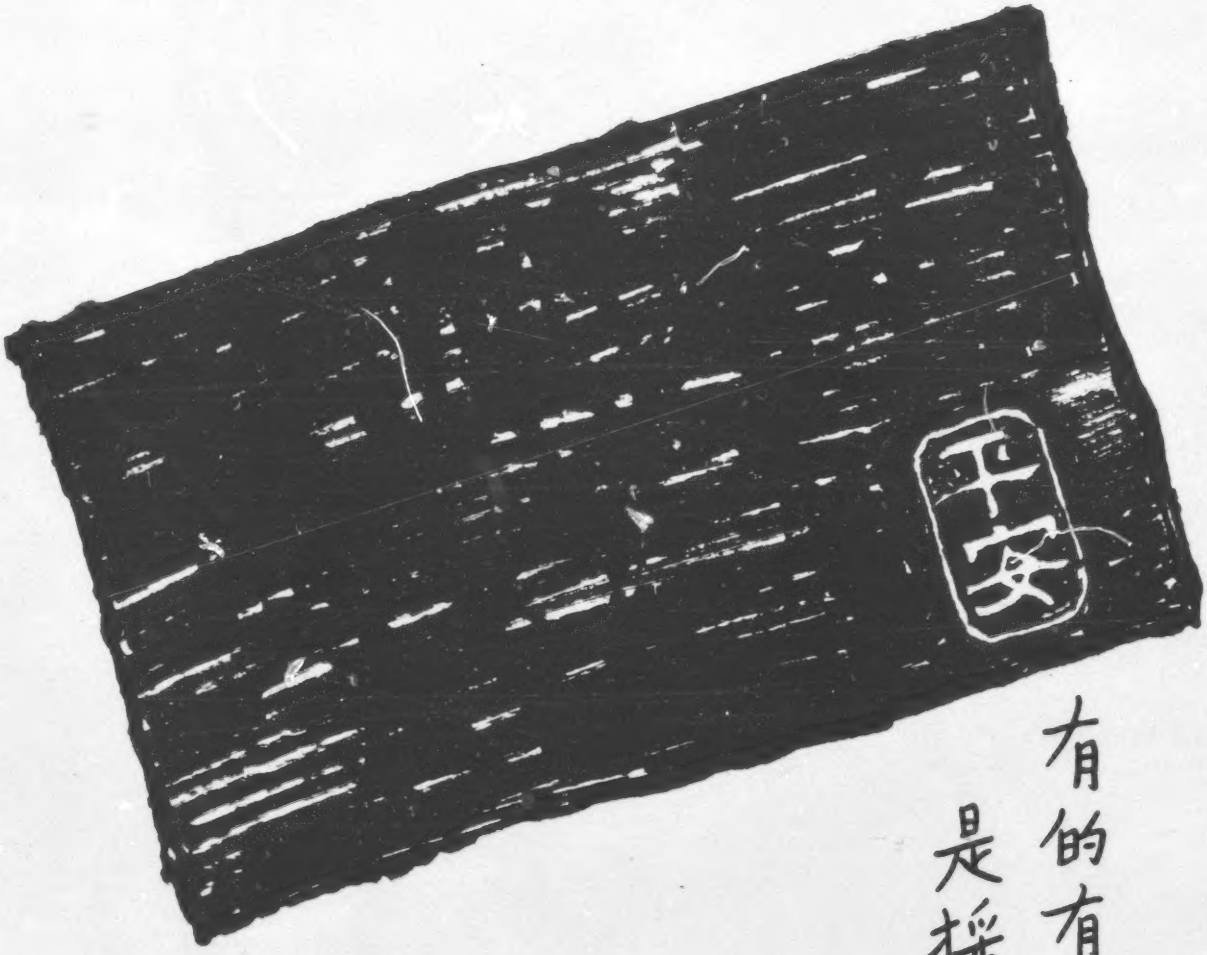
有些印上桃子，
是採長壽的意思

Some have old Chinese coins printed on them. It is a wish for a prosperous year.

有的有兩個錢，是採新年發財的意思。

有些有「大吉」兩字，採新年吉祥的意思。

Some have the Chinese words 大吉 on them to wish a New Year full of good news and good thoughts.



有的有竹，
是採竹報平安的意思。

Some have bamboo on them.
It is a wish for peace.

Ming says "Wow! There are so many good wishes printed on these red envelopes. I guess I will save my money as well as the envelopes. Thanks for letting me know."

小明說：「原來紅封上的圖案這樣有意思，我不再把紅封隨便丟了。」

CHINESE BILINGUAL PROJECT
中美雙語教育

NOTES:

1) *Red envelopes are used at Chinese New Year and other festivities. They are used to express gratitude, to send good wishes, or as gifts.*

2) *Red envelopes with a printed design should be treated as greeting cards. It is considered bad manners for children to take out the money and throw away the envelope in front of the giver or out on the street.*

3) *The giver could put any amount of money into the envelope. Children should learn that it is the* thought *that counts.*

4) *Red and gold are the lucky colors in China. It is a tradition to use red envelopes on happy occasions and white envelopes at funerals.*

5) *Red envelopes with any good-wish designs could be used during the Chinese New Year, with the possible exception of the "double-happiness"* 囍囍 *one, which is traditionally associated with weddings.*

6) *Married adults are the givers of the red envelopes. Children and single adults (who are considered children)* should not *give out red envelopes.*

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